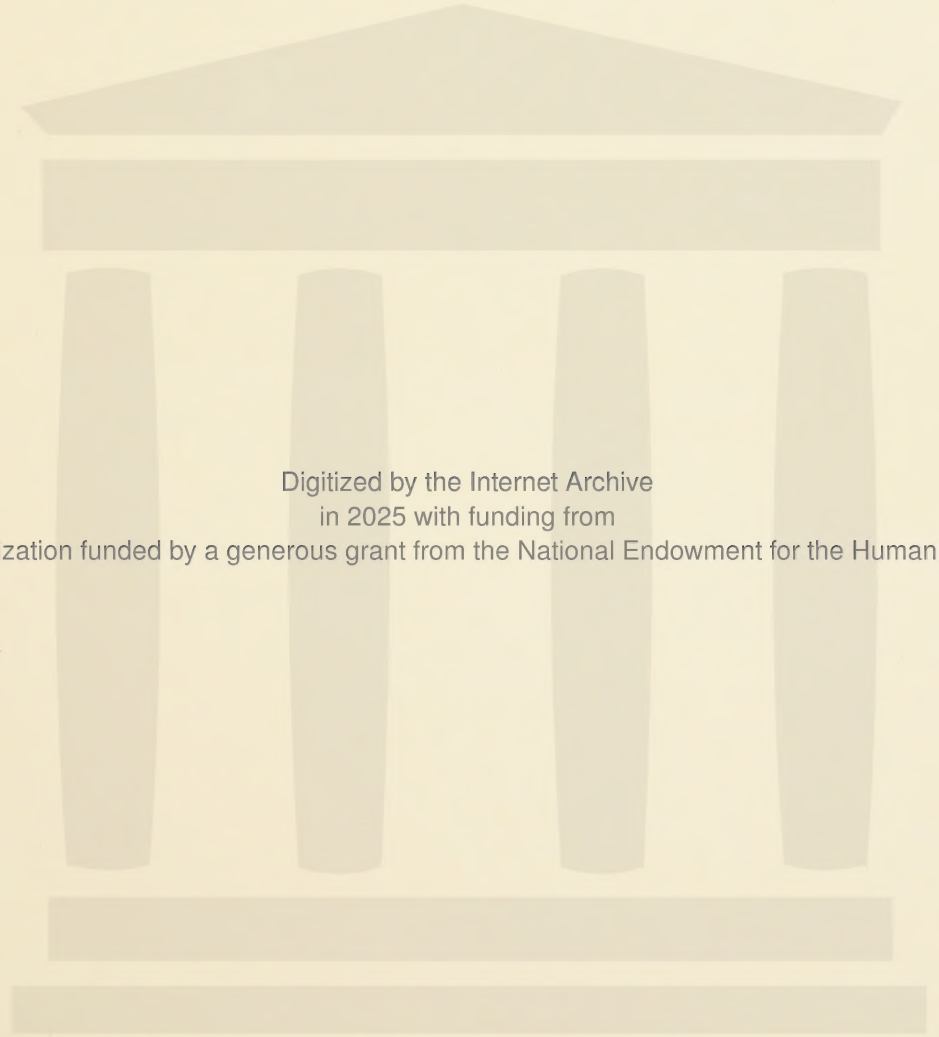

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FUN AND GAMES

Marathon info

Team Diabetes Marathon informational meeting, Tuesday, at Fleet Feet Sports, 8204-A Menaul NE. Free. Contact: Christine Rocha, 266-5716, Ext. 7132.

Coaching clinic

Family YMCA hosts a coaches' clinic with John Kessel of Team USA for coaches and high school-age and older players, Saturday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., at Griffith Gym in Los Alamos. Call: (505) 662-3100.

Take a stride

Belen Noon Optimist Club's Stride for Nonviolence 10K and 5K Race, 5K Walk and 100-Yard Run are Sunday, 8:30 a.m., at Belen High School. Cost for 10K/5K Race is $15 by Friday, $20 after. Cost for 5K Walk is $10. Call: 299-8922, 864-7283 or 865-0139.

Recreation Calendar, Page C2

GO! Outdoors & Recreation

C

FISHING LINE: *Salmon snagging begins at Navajo and Eagle Nest. Youngster with Scoobydoo rod takes a largemouth below Cochiti.* 4

Conservation group a '30s success story

Hunters formed Ducks Unlimited to battle effects of Depression-era drought

BY CRAIG SPRINGER
For the Journal

Imagine the scene. The United States was in an economic quandary. The unemployment rate soared, the stock market bellied out, lines at the soup kitchen stretched into the street. A general malaise set over the land.

Like pouring salt into an already vitiated wound, a prolonged drought across the southern Plains and Midwest made a lot of farm land about worthless, prolonging the agony of the Great Depression.

That 10-year drought, known as the Dust Bowl era, sent farmers and their families on mass migrations westward seeking work. John Steinbeck memorialized the human struggle in "Grapes of Wrath": "And then the dispossessed were drawn west; families dusted out, tractored out. They streamed over the mountains, hungry."

The wrath of drought had another effect on migrations — duck migrations. As the economy went into a downward spiral, so too did waterfowl numbers. Waterfowl habitat was converted to farmland through government-sponsored wetland drainage programs — an increasingly fruitless endeavor for the agrarian and the duck. Prairie potholes — paradise for pintails — turned to dust.

But hunters, being the first conservationists, went into action.

In 1937, a group of concerned sportsmen banded together and formed Ducks Unlimited. One year after its inception, 6,700 folks called themselves members and raised $90,000 for on-the-ground conservation work.

Sixty-four years later, 757,000 conservationists belong to Ducks Unlimited.

It remains a volunteer-based, grass-roots organization focused on the tradition of meaningful conservation work. Since its inception, Ducks Unlimited has raised $1.6 billion to conserve wetlands — not just for waterfowl, but for a whole host of animals dependent upon these unique habitats, such as snakes, songbirds, hawks and fur bearers.

People benefit, too. Wetlands are extremely important in recharging underground aquifers that human populations rely upon. To date, 9.8 million acres of wetlands across North America have been conserved through Ducks Unlimited.

The Albuquerque chapter of Ducks Unlimited, along with 11 other New Mexico chapters, has had its share of success. Since 1993, 800 DU members across the state have raised more than $192,000, largely from their annual banquets. According to Albuquerque chapter chairman Jerry Burton, about 85 percent of the money garnered at the annual affair goes directly toward wetlands conservation.

"We're a lean a organization," says Burton. "Most of our fund-raising goes directly into conservation. That's not too common among large conservation groups."

According to Tom Fulgham, from the Ducks Unlimited national office, the annual banquets are the lifeblood of DU.

"It's part of that tradition that is DU. It's our grass-roots rallying point," says Fulgham.

See **DUCKS** *on* **PAGE C3**

If you go

WHAT: Annual Ducks Unlimited fund-raising banquet

WHERE: Four Hills Country Club

WHEN: Saturday, doors open at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 7 p.m.

COST: $50 for individual, $70 for couple, $30 for children

RESERVATIONS: Contact Carole Shores, 293-9458, or Jerry Burton, 822-8309.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ED SCHAUB

LIGHT AS FEATHERS: Only a few days old, the wild peregrine falcon chick harvested by Carlsbad's Ed Schaub last year weighed less than 80 grams when taken from its cliffside aerie in southern Arizona.

New Mexico falconer achieves longtime dream with capture of young peregrine

SOARING EXPERIENCE

Story by **BEN IKENSON**
For the Journal

ADOLPHE PIERRE-LOUIS/JOURNAL

IN THE MASTER'S HANDS: Master falconer Ed Schaub of Carlsbad provides a perch for a 10-year-old peregrine falcon. Last year, Schaub legally took the first peregrine from the wild since the bird was removed from the endangered species list in 1999.

On outstretched wings, the male lunges at a flock of band-tail pigeons and emerges with a limp bird dangling in its talons. His mate bounds from her perch on the limb of a ponderosa, and together their shrieking cackles rebound across the ancient wall of an adjacent sandstone cliff. He sails high above her, gliding in slow, ever-widening circles over the canyon. At last, upon aligning his aquiline frame with that of his partner below, he drops the food to her.

Such instinctual offerings occur when a pair of peregrine falcons reunite, in late winter or early spring, at an established nest site, called an aerie, for the ritual rendezvous that perpetuates the species.

For Carlsbad falconer Ed Schaub, this aerial courtship behavior is more than just a remarkable spectacle. For him, it served as indication of where to locate a productive aerie in the mountainous terrain of southeastern Arizona.

In May 2000, after a long and arduous wait, Schaub legally took the first peregrine from the wild since the bird was removed from the endangered species list in 1999. For falconers like Schaub, this historical harvest completed a 30-year circle in the recovery of the species.

Recovery efforts

Because of pesticides such as DDT, which thinned the eggshells of many bird species, less than 100 pairs of peregrines existed by the mid-1960s. To thwart extinction, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service placed the bird on the endangered species list, and, subsequent to the 1972 federal banning of DDT, recovery efforts became plausible.

With support from state and federal agencies, and various other partners, The Peregrine Fund, which comprises many falconers and ornithologists, spearheaded intensive recovery efforts, ultimately producing more than 6,000 peregrines that were returned to the wild over 25 years.

Other falconers worked closely with the group, providing specimens for captive breeding. On Aug. 20, 1999, the peregrine was removed from the endangered species list in a landmark moment in conservation history.

Now that peregrine populations are stronger, many believe that limited permits to take peregrines from the wild is a just reward for falconing enthusiasts. "Had it not been for falconers," says Schaub, "that bird would probably have been gone."

After the federal endangered status was lifted, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced it would consider proposals for the

See **FALCON** *on* **PAGE C2**

Man has emerged from the shadows of antiquity with a peregrine on his wrist. Its dispassionate brown eyes, more than any other bird, have been witness to the struggle for civilization, from the squalid tents on the steppes of Asia thousands of years ago, to the marbled halls of European kings in the 17th century.

ROGER TORY PETERSON, FROM "BIRDS OVER AMERICA"

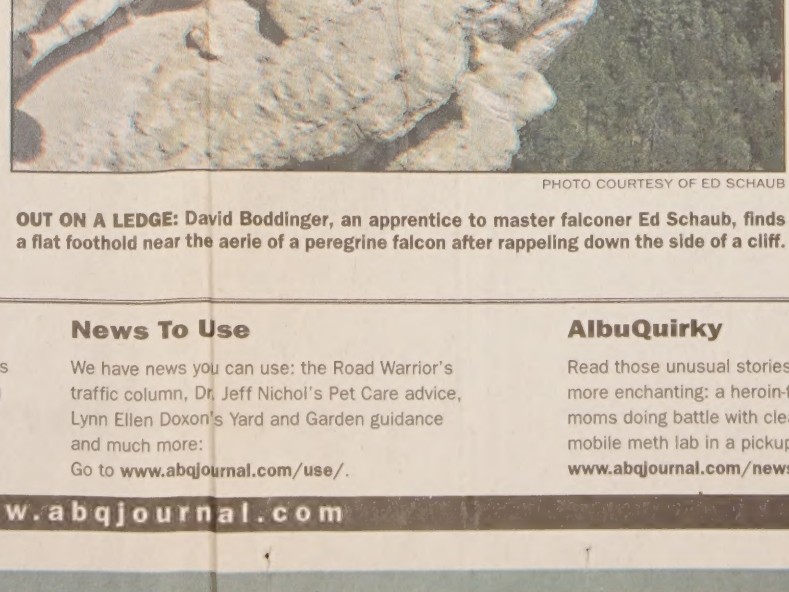

PHOTO COURTESY OF ED SCHAUB

OUT ON A LEDGE: David Boddinger, an apprentice to master falconer Ed Schaub, finds a flat foothold near the aerie of a peregrine falcon after rappeling down the side of a cliff.

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Falconer achieves dream with capture of peregrine

from **PAGE C1**

harvest of up to 5 percent of peregrine nestlings from the wild, and state game and fish departments then began considering issuing permits to licensed falconers.

While New Mexico would not allow it, Arizona assessed 5 percent of productivity — based on data focusing on the success rate of chicks to fledge — for 167 known nest sites in the state, according to James Driscoll, a nongame biologist for the Arizona Department of Game and Fish. Driscoll adds that the estimate was on the conservative side since it did not account for the strong likelihood of undocumented nest sites in the state.

The 5-percent estimate equated to eight birds; Arizona therefore opted to offer eight permits, three to be awarded on a lottery basis to nonresident applicants.

As a New Mexico resident, Schaub was elated and sent his application as soon as he could. "Taking a wild peregrine," he said, "was something I had dreamed of doing for 15 or so years."

Indeed, the once-endangered raptor is among falconry's most esteemed subjects. To falconers, the sport is more religion than recreation. Its origins are often mistakenly traced to medieval Europe, but Europeans only adopted falconry after the Crusades exposed them to it in the Middle East, where the tradition had been practiced for more than two millennia.

Today, falconry engages a dedicated following worldwide that enjoys the union of hunting and observing an unforgettable scene that depicts nature's beauty and her brutality: A raptor slowly rising to a pitch before suddenly diving at up to 200 miles an hour to strike prey. As the fastest animal in the world, the peregrine is quite possibly the most advanced predator on Earth, and it is unquestionably a sacred icon to falconers.

"The peregrine has evolved for thousands of years to become the specialist that it is," says Schaub. "For the bird to survive, it becomes good at killing, and the prey base becomes good at dodging strikes. In these evolutionary circumstances, the falconer merely conditions the predator to develop its instinctive potential."

LISA EDMONDSON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WINGED WONDER: As the fastest animal in the world, the peregrine falcon is quite possibly the most advanced predator on Earth. It can dive at speeds up to 200 miles per hour to strike prey.

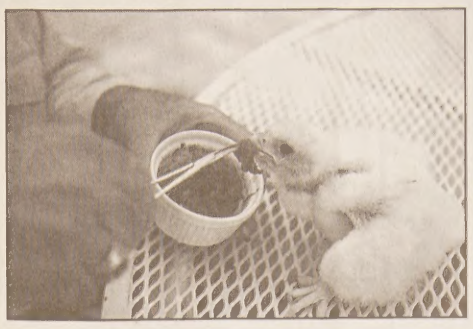
Schaub adds that the sport requires of its human participant a keen eye to observe these subtle developments, and an acute awareness of nature.

Preparations

Certainly in the United States, the sport requires patience. Because so many stages exist to protect the bird and preserve the tradition's integrity, it takes at least seven years to become a master falconer, including a two-year apprenticeship under an experienced falconer. Ed Schaub joined the ranks of New Mexico master falconers in February 1996. Five years later, in February 2001, the state of Arizona notified Schaub that his name was drawn for a nonresident permit for the proposed peregrine harvest.

In fact, his was one of only three permits awarded of the eight available because the state had not received as many applications as it had anticipated. But Schaub would still have to wait for a final decision from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which exercises concurrent jurisdiction over activities involving threatened or endangered species, as well as those protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Meanwhile, Schaub and his wife, Anne, spent weekends scouting out nest sites in Arizona, looking for the magnificent aerial courtship displays through binoculars. Because aeries in the Southwest are usually found in natural openings in the walls of remote cliffs or mesas, the Schaubs were required to hike deep into the wilderness. After many nights in tents and countless tanks of gas, they rated five potential sites on the basis of accessibility.



FEEDING TIME: A peregrine falcon chick, pictured at 12 days old, takes a bite of ground quail from the hand of master falconer Ed Schaub.

ADOLPHE PIERRE-LOUIS/JOURNAL

Remote sites

On May 7, Schaub received news that the harvest would be permitted. He and Anne jumped into their pick-up truck and drove west to the easiest of the five sites they had listed. After a swift ascent to the mountaintop, Schaub rapelled over the edge of a 100-foot cliff and located the aerie. Unfortunately, it only contained a single chick. Because it discourages future use of a site by peregrines, removing a single chick from an aerie is not condoned.

Site No. 2, nestled in a mountain range straddling the New Mexico/Arizona border, presented another challenge. After a long hike that began in Arizona, Schaub's GPS unit divulged another disappointment — the aerie he was approaching was about 300 yards into New Mexico. It would be illegal to pursue harvesting in his home state.

The couple proceeded to aerie No. 3, relegated as such because of its extreme remoteness. They decided to call Schaub's apprentice, David Biddinger, and his brother, John, for assistance. By noon a few days later, the group had trudged five hours along the backside of a 250-foot cliff, through steep, forested inclines and rocky, juniper-studded terrain.

"We took the long route with the idea not to scare the parents off the nest," recalls Schaub.

While the men set to task making anchors for the rapelling, Anne laid down to peek over the ledge, trying to pinpoint the aerie. What the group failed to notice was that a mother falcon had been perched in a snag some distance away. Evidently, female peregrines are very protective of their territories. As soon as Anne laid down, the bird made a beeline for her head.

"This falcon put her feet out," Schaub recalls, "and hit Anne so hard that it almost knocked itself out of the air. Anne's hair flew up wildly and the sound of contact was like the crack of a baseball bat … Anne's head had been cut 2 inches long and pretty damn deep."

In fact, the crew was pressed to reach the aerie posthaste since the mother was off her chicks. While she flew around frantically, threatening another attack, Schaub dropped the rope over the edge. Biddinger rapelled down, bouncing from crag to crag, until he located the aerie. In it were four downy chicks.

Upon close examination, all appeared healthy. Schaub secured one and went down the mountain.

Fortunately, the injury to Anne's head proved not to be too serious.

The next day, the couple left with the chick in the cab of the truck. "I think she weighed 79 grams with a full crop two days after I brought her home. I'm guessing she was three, no more than four days old when we got her."

To justify taking a chick from its nest, Schaub explains he is improving the chances of survival for the bird, and the species.

"Particularly with a clutch of four, oftentimes the parents just can't feed that many chicks, and so all four become weak. Often two will die."

Other factors pose threats to birds in the wild, he says; many that fledge don't reach adulthood because of electrocution on power lines, diseases, predators or inability to obtain food.

The 'perfect hobby'

Today, Schaub feeds his falcon quail raised for the purpose, until she is ready to hunt on her own. Because she was taken at such a young age, she is not nervous around humans. She thinks Schaub is her mother, and, like a mother, he keeps a watchful eye on her.

Perhaps because the sport so intimately — and laboriously — involves the human, Aldo Leopold called falconry "the perfect hobby." In "A Sand County Almanac," he wrote that, "no living man can, or possibly ever will, understand the instinct of predation we share with our raptorial servant."

For Schaub, falconry provides a primal link, demonstrating that humans, in their natural state of curiosity, can coexist with nature and partake in the movement of the wild.

In describing the essence of his sport, Schaub does not depict the ritual of putting on the leather glove and removing the captive falcon's hood, nor the awesome sight of a peregrine on the hunt. Rather, he conveys a sense of profound human wonder. He recalls being at an aerie, perched above a wild panorama, barely accessible to civilization. The rock he sits on may be hot, it may be cold — it is whatever the elements dictate. A powerful musky odor emanates from the outcropping.

Poised in the aerie, Schaub senses the countless generations that have used it in the past, and watches the world from a remarkable vantage point.

"This bird has evolved through eons of time, and I'm lucky enough to observe it," he says. "And when I'm long gone and dead, that process will continue. From this perspective, I've developed an incredibly keen respect for what nature is all about. It's not about taking man out of the equation. It's about life on this planet under very harsh terms, and it is also life in its simplest form — procreation, death, survival."

RECREATION CALENDAR

BASKETBALL

Sandia Prep High School: Looking for freshman boys coach. Contact: Pete MacFarlane, 344-1671.

Albuquerque Basketball Officials Association: Need officials for middle and high school games. Meeting Oct. 29, at Sandia High in Yucca Annex Building, 6 p.m. Contact: Paul Lawson, 831-5573, or Ron McCall, 275-1381.

Players Wanted: Albuquerque Angels (homeschool), JV and varsity girls ages 11-17. Contact: Dan Rosecrans, 296-9100.

CYCLING

N.M. Touring Society: Climb and Cruise, hike La Luz and ride down east side, Saturday, 9 a.m., at Sandia Tram parking lot. Deadline is Friday. Contact: Dean, 898-4811. … Bernalillo Blast, 39 or 50 miles, Oct. 27, 8:30 a.m., at Smith's on Montgomery and Tramway. Contact: Dorothy, 332-0824.

MARTIAL ARTS

Albuquerque Judokai: Offering beginning and advanced classes to men, women and children in Kodokan Judo, Aikido, Shoshin-Ryu Jujitsu and Children's First Jujutsu. Times and days vary. Contact: Wayne Maxwell, 293-5836.

Jim Hawkes Karate Academy: 3-Week Women's Basic Self-Defense class, Saturdays beginning this Saturday-Nov. 3, at Jim Hawkes Karate Academy, 7121 Menaul NE. Class fee is $50. Contact: Anita Gallegos, 881-5200.

MISCELLANY

Santa Fe Dahn Yoga Center: Experiential Holistic Health Workshop, today, 5:30-7 p.m. Free. … Brain respiration class, Saturday, 10:30-11:30 a.m. Free. Contact: Master Yoo and Master Kim, (505) 820-2211.

Hands Across Cultures: Kundalini Yoga classes, Thursdays beginning today, 6-7 p.m., at HACC Teen Center, 89 La Puebla in Española. Contact: Phillip Gonzales, (505) 747-1889.

N.M. Cross Country Ski Club: "Buying Ski Equipment" program, today, 7:30 p.m., at Albuquerque Garden Center, 10120 Lomas NE. Cost is $15 per year. Contact: Sam Beard, 828-0673.

Sandia Peak Ski Patrol: Ski Swap, Nov. 2-4, at N.M. State Fairgrounds, Creative Arts Building. Equipment check-in, Nov. 2, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.; sale, Nov. 3, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; super sale, Nov. 4, 1-4 p.m. Cost is 50 cents. Contact: Karen Smith, 888-4442.

Gold Prospectors of N.M.: Recreational gold prospecting meeting, today, 6:30-9 p.m., at Los Griegos Multi-Service Center, 1231 Candelaria NW. Free. Contact: Dean Brubaker, 898-3301.

Corrales Parks and Recreation: Looking for volunteers to assist with gymnastics, dancing, arts and

See **RECREATION** *on* **PAGE C3**

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